1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

society, as the initiation rites mark the entrance of boys into adult male society.

While the people of Lesu have no record of ages and no unit of the year, there is some knowledge from observation of the development of the body (particularly the size of the breasts) as to when the first menses may be expected. Everyone knows that some time within the next eight or ten moons a young girl will reach puberty. When I asked who of the village would probably reach puberty during my visit, I was told that most likely it would be Tsuros. And that is as it happened. Tsuros has her first menses, and the news spreads eagerly through the village. It is talked about as a great event. Immediately bananas are brought by the women of both moieties and buried in the sand by the men, in preparation for the feast which will soon be held.

There is no seclusion for the girl during this period of her first menses, at the end of which is her ritual washing. Just before sunrise she is washed in the sea by an old woman, who holds in her hand a branch of the tree *tsil*. The girl and the old woman stand in the rather shallow water just off the reef as the old woman dips the leaves in the sea and then waves them over the girl, touching the various parts of her body with the wet leaves. As she does so she says the following spell:

> Leaf, leaf, I wash her,
> Soon her breasts will develop,
> I take away sickness of blood.

Then the leaves are mixed with white lime and rubbed all over the body of the girl by the same old woman, and after that she paints the girl's hair red. The old woman is not chosen for her relationship to the girl, or because she is of any particular moiety or clan, but merely because of her knowledge of the spell. Should the ritual washing of the girl not occur, it is thought that her breasts will not develop, and she would therefore lack the symbol of womanhood.

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

881 616 A feast is held on the day of the ritual washing. The village women of both moieties come, bringing their taro, to the hamlet where the girl lives, and there they prepare it to be baked in the *liga*. The girl herself is present, but does not help in the preparations. Then the women of the *Telenga* moiety give the food that they have brought and prepared to the women of the *Kongkong* moiety, and *vice versa*. The girl is given a bundle of taro specially prepared for her by her father's sister. If the girl is of the *Telenga* moiety, the *Telenga* women advance singing, carrying bundles of taro given to them by the *Kongkong* women, to the place where the girl is sitting and pile the food up in front of her. They sing: [533]

Nama maagulip igitupmi
maresik weh weh
ngat amni tso ogaluna.[1]

The *Telenga* women then remain sitting by the girl near the pile of food contributed by the *Kongkong* women, who sit a short distance away by their pile of food given by the *Telenga* women. Each group eats a little, and then loads the remainder in their baskets to carry home, where the whole family get their share.

[565] This is one of the few ritual occasions which is dominated by the women. But the relationship of the girl to her father seems to be stressed at this time, as the women in discussing this matter with me always emphasized the fact that the women giving the food to the girl and the members of her moiety are of the same moiety as her father. Although the girl is betrothed and her wedding rites follow shortly, there is no mention that it is her future husband's moiety who is giving her taro.

• 841 Before describing the wedding rites which come some time during the next month, the subject of menstruation in

[198] [1] This I am unable to translate. Most of the songs of this people are in some obsolete and forgotten language, and they themselves do not know the meaning of the words.

1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

general may be touched upon. The women have pain the first day, headache, and sometimes cramps, which diminish the second and third days. During their first menses they do not wash in the sea, but they do so during the succeeding ones. The attitude towards their monthly illness, in general, is that it is a nuisance. There is also a feeling of shame about it as far as men are concerned. The women would be very much ashamed to have men see their menstruating blood. In the past, when straw aprons were worn, they always inserted extra straw in them, and to-day they wear a black loin-cloth instead of a light-coloured one. There is no other protection. They do not have intercourse while they are menstruating, and regard such a custom as disgusting.

Some time within a month after the first menses the marriage rites are held. Betrothal has already been described.

WEDDING RITES

The husband-to-be has been making presents to his future wife and her clan relatives since he first secured their consent. Now come the final rites and the payment for the bride. Tsuros had her first menses in the beginning of November, and her wedding rites were held on November 23rd. Preparations began on November 14th, when all the women of Lesu went to Panat, the hamlet where Tsuros lives with her parents, to practise their dancing. The next day bananas were buried in the sand on the beach at Panat. From then on, until the day of the rites, the women practise their dances every night at this hamlet. Tsuros, the bride-to-be, is sometimes present participating in the rehearsal, but on other nights she is away crab-hunting on the reef. She does not dance during the rites, and her absence or presence at rehearsals seems to mean nothing to the other women. One night when the women were dancing around a fire and the full moon was shining upon them, they were in a